

The Concept of Motherly Love in Margaret Widdemer's "The Watcher"

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Abstract

Margaret Widdemer's "The Watcher" tells about how the watcher has wonderful love to her beloved. The purpose of this study is to analyze the intrinsic elements of the poem and the kind of love in the poem. The writer uses psychological approach to prove that the love in this poem is between mother and her children based on Erich Fromm's theory of love. The writer uses library research in her study for collecting the data. The writer obtained the data and information related to the object from the books and internet source. The result of this study shows that the poem talks about the love of mother to her children. It can be categorized into motherly love.

Keywords: intrinsic element, theory of love, motherly love

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

A Literary work is considered as a form of expression from the author that is expressed in writing by the author with his imagination, and one of the form of literary work is poetry. As Brooks and Warren noted in the *Understanding Poetry*, a poem is created by language, literary convention, and ideas (1952: 516). Each line in a poem always has its meaning depending on the context.

In this extended essay, the writer chooses a poem "The Watcher" because it is one of the beautiful poems by Margaret Widdemer which contains aspects of love. The study of this extended essay is to analyze the intrinsic elements which build the poem in order to prove that the poem talks about love. The writer also uses Erich Fromm's theory of love to analyze what kind of love that appears in the poem. This study is expected that the readers will get new experience and knowledge about love after reading this extended essay.

1.2 Research Problems

The writer read the poem deeply and found the problem to be studied, the points are:

1. How do the intrinsic elements build the poem “The Watcher” by Margaret Widdemer?
2. What kind of love that appears in Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

In a poem with the title, “The Watcher”, the objectives of this extended essay are:

1. To analyze the intrinsic elements that build Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”
2. To analyze the kind of love that appears in Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Intrinsic elements

The following is the statement from Welek and Werren in their book *Theory of Literature* about analysis of intrinsic element,

Intrinsic interpretation can play close attention to such elements as rhythm, rhyme, and meter and to the way, these aspects of the sound of literary language influence the overall impression of literary work art. Similarly such approaches can attend to the participation of images, metaphors, symbols and myth in the totally integrity of the literary work. (1942: 211)

The work of art, which is analyzed in this extended essay is a poem. Intrinsic elements of the poem that will be discussed in this extended essay are the diction, imagery and symbol.

2.1.1 Diction

Diction is the basic part of literary work because it contains selection of words that compose the work of art. Cleanth Brooks in the book *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students*, 3th edition says diction is “the choice of words in poetry or any other form of discourse” (1976: 553). It shows the poet’s feeling that represents her experiences or intense emotions. The best choice of word will create deep meanings for the readers. Therefore, a poet must be smart in choosing and combining the words in making an impressive poem.

Diction or the choice of word becomes the main element in a poem. It shows the poet’s emotions such as sadness, happiness, disappointment, expectation, etc. It is the reason why diction becomes one of the discussions in this extended essay. Diction is made up of two components: denotation and connotation. They are tools that one can use to understand the meaning of a poem.

The first term in diction is denotation. Denotation means the literal meaning and it does not have any other interpretation. It is emphasized by Perrine’s statement “denotation is the basic part of meaning. It is the dictionary meaning of the words” (1982: 38). It means if we do not know about the certain definition of some words, we can find the meaning by searching in the dictionary. For instance, if we look up the word flower, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* we will find that it is “the part of plant from which the seed of fruit develops, often brightly colored and lasting only for a short time” (Hornby, 2010: 574).

The second term of diction is connotation. Connotation is the other definition of a word beyond dictionary's meaning or interpretation depending on the context of a word where it appears. Perrine's states "beyond its denotations, a word may also have connotations. The connotations are what it suggests beyond what it expresses: its overtones of meaning" (Perrine, 1982: 38). Connotative meaning of word exists together with the denotative meaning. If related to example above, the connotative meaning of flower could be woman or beauty.

2.1.2 Symbol

Symbol is a type of figurative language and an image, which always has greater meaning than a word itself. Based on Perrine's explanation in his book, symbol is defined as "something that means more than what it is" (1987:585). Symbol has highly suggestive image to enrich the meaning of a word. An image is usually transferred by something that represents something else. Symbol is also used by the author to identify and to define the meaning. A example of symbol in the poem can be seen in "A red, red rose" by Robert Burns in line one (Perrine, 1987: 111).

O my luv is like a red, red rose

The speaker uses "rose" in this poem to symbolize as a woman. Rose is figure of speech for a woman because of its beauty like a woman.

2.1.3 Imagery

Imagery is the forming of mental images, figures, or likenesses of things. It is also the use of language to represent actions, persons, objects, and ideas descriptively. This means encompassing the senses also rather than just forming a

mental picture. Imagery is one of the important elements in a poem because the reader will understand the poem when they build mental pictures in the mind.

As Abrams states in his book *A Glossary of Literary Term* that, imagery “is one of the most common in criticism, and one of the most variable in meaning. Its applications range all the way from the "mental pictures" which, it is sometimes claimed, are experienced by the reader of a poem, to the totality of the components which make up a poem” (1999: 121). In other words, imagery has function to indicate the object and its sense perception’s qualities which can be noticed through the words inside the literary works.

There are several types of imagery. Those are: visual imagery (sense of sight), auditory imagery (sense of hearing), tactile imagery (sense of touch), organic imagery (internal sensation), olfactory imagery (sense of smell), gustatory imagery (sense of taste) and kinesthetic imagery (sense of movement) (Abrams, 1999: 121). In this extended essay the writer focuses on the analysis of the visual imagery, organic imagery, and tactile imagery.

Visual imagery is an image that appears from eyesight. For example in Robert Browning’s “Parting at Morning” (Perrine, 1987: 553), in the first line can be seen the example of visual imagery.

Round the cape of sudden came the sea

The speaker uses visual imagery to share his experience when he sees the sun at the beach The round thing came from the sea.

Organic imagery is an image that appears from thought or relates with the internal sensation such as hungry, thirsty, tired, sad, etc. Here is an example from

Thomas Hardy's In Time of "The Breaking of Nations" (Priestley and Spear, 1963: 587)

*Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk*

The phrases such as *a man harrowing clods* (line 1) and *a slow silent walk* (line 2) contain organic imagery. They show the readers about the sadness and loneliness felt by the speaker in war time. He walks all along the road hopelessly and faintly with no strength to struggle or even walk anymore.

Tactile imagery is an image that can be felt by skin to feel the hardness, softness, cold, warm, etc. The example below is adapted from John Betjeman's "Hertfordshire", stanza three line three and four (Priestley and Spear, 1963: 683).

*Through welwy, Hatfeld, Potters, Bar,
Tweed and cigar smoke, gloom and wet!*

The word *tweed* asks the readers to imagine about soft woolen cloth that produces warmth and makes them feel comfortable and caressed. The word *wet* asks the readers to imagine the parts of their body which are soaked with water, then all of them are wet.

2.2 Erich Fromm's Concept of "Motherly Love"

Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving* talks about love, the theory, the object and application. According to Fromm "love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is a "standing in" not a "falling for." In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving" (1956: 22). It means that love is an activity of giving something of the most

precious that humans have for someone whom they loved in order to make them feel happy and satisfied.

Furthermore, Fromm adds an explanation about love as an active care. He says “love is the active care for the life and growth of that which we love. Where this active care is lacking, there is no love” (Fromm, 1956: 26). From that quotation, it is clear that care is one of the important elements of love. Where there is no care, there is no love. It is impossible to love without giving care.

Moreover, Fromm says “the essence of love is to “labor” for something and “to make something grow” (Fromm, 1956: 27). Love means doing the labor in order to make someone who we love happy and grow to be a better person. We only can be said to love it when we have proven our labor.

According to Fromm, there are five kinds of love. The first type is brotherly love. It is love in the human relationship, all of people in this world is our brotherhood (1956: 47). The second type is erotic love. It is very nature exclusive and not universal love, also it includes the sexual desire (1956: 52). The third type is self love. This love says “as long as you love another person less than you love yourself, you will not really succeed in loving yourself” (1956: 63). The fourth type is love of God. This love for each person is different. It depends on several factors, because of the life experience of each person (1956: 63). However the writer focuses only on one type of love, namely motherly love. According to Oxford dictionary, motherly is “having the qualities of a good mother; typical of a mother (Hornby, 2010: 963).

Motherly love is the love between mother and child, it can be proven through the characteristics of motherly love explained in Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*. First, "motherly love is unconditional affirmation of the child's life and his needs" (Fromm, 1956: 49). "Mother loves the newborn infant because it is her child, not because the child has fulfilled any specific condition, or lived up to any specific expectation" (1956: 41). Mother does not get anything in return from the child, except a smile or the expression of satisfaction in his face (1956: 50). This unconditional love means her love is sincere and eternal. She is always ready for her child, to love them, to show the beauty of the world and to give the way to live. As long as we are her child, her love for us is never die. It can not be stopped even when mother has passed away.

Second, "the relationship of mother and child is by its very nature one of inequality, where one needs all the help and the other gives it" (1956: 50). That is why the motherly love has been considered as the highest kind of love and the most sacred of all emotional bonds.

Third, "the very essence of motherly love is to care for the child's growth and that means to want the child's separation from her self" (1956: 51). At this stage, motherly love becomes the hardest duty of a mother because it requires unselfishness, the ability to give everything without wanting anything but child's happiness (1956: 52). It clearly tells that motherly love's character shows relationship between mother and child in which a mother gives her care to her child's life.

3. Research Method

To look for some information related to the object, the writer uses library research. Based on Semi, library research is the method of research focusing on the library as the place filled with the information and data related to the paper (1993: 17). By this method, the writer reads some books and other articles from library and internet as references to help in analyzing the poem.

Psychological approach is also used in this extended essay. The approach concerns with the psychological elements of the poem. Literary work is enriched and contains the values of life and human experience. In other words, the psychological approach in reviewing the literature based on the assumption that the literary work always discusses events that range from human behavior (Wellek & Warren, 1942: 298). Therefore, the use of psychological approach in this study is to analyze the kind of love that narrator states in Margaret Widdemer's "The Watcher" based on theory of love by Erich Fromm.

4. The Concept of Motherly Love in Margaret Widdemer's "The Watcher"

4.1 Analysis of Diction in Margaret Widdemer's "The Watcher"

The poem was written with meaningful words. The words in the poem are selected to support the purpose of the poem itself. To understand the poem, it is needed to understand the meaning of the words used in it. Here is analysis of the diction in the poem.

The title of the poem, "The Watcher" clearly stated what the purpose of the poem, which is talk about subject "The Watcher", who is the watcher and what is the watcher doing. In order to understand the poem, as mentioned before,

it is needed to understand the words of the poem. This can be done by analyzing the diction in every stanza below. The first two lines of the poem's first stanza say:

*She always leaned to watch for us
Anxious if we were late,*

In the first line, the speaker starts by using denotation in the word "she". The meaning of the word "she" based on Hornby in his dictionary *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* is a "female person or animal that has already been mentioned or is easily identified" (Hornby, 2010: 1359). The writer assumes that the word "she" is the pronoun of "the watcher" because that word has already mentioned before the word "she", and she refers to woman. The watcher has wonderful care to the character "us" in the poem. The word "us" refers to people whom she love. According to *Oxford Dictionary*, the word "us" means people who are the object of a verb. From that explanation, it means this poem tells about "the watcher" who has a relationship with more than one person. The watcher shows her care to "us" that clearly explain that she has love to the character "us" in the poem. Therefore, the character "us" is the watcher's beloved. It is supported with the usage of the word "anxious" in line two whose meaning is feeling worried or nervous, wanting something very much (Hornby, 2010: 54). Anxious is the worry feeling which gives the sign that the watcher has love to her beloved. Moreover, the watcher's love can be seen in the word "always" and "watch". According to *Oxford Dictionary*, the word "always" is defined as all times; on every occasion or for all future time (Hornby, 2010: 42) and the word "watch" is to take care of somebody or something (2010: 1677). The watcher's

care never stops, she will watch her beloved for all future time. It shows that the watcher has wonderful love to “us”.

The watcher’s wonderful love is supported with the word “winter” and “summer” in line three and four,

*In **winter** by the window,
In **summer** by the gate.*

According to *Oxford Dictionary*, “winter” is “defined as the coldest season of the year, between autumn and spring” (Hornby, 2010: 1705). “Summer” is “the warmest season of the year, coming between spring and autumn” (2010: 1495). However, the word “winter” are the connotation of the sadness and “summer” is the happiness. The author want to tells that the watcher gives her love every time in every situation, whether she is in good condition or bad condition. It shows her love is sincere, without hoping anything except the happiness for her beloved. The word “window” and “gate” shows that she is watching in a place.

The love relationship of the character in this poem can be found in stanza two, line three and four,

*The long way **home** would seem **more safe**,
Because she waited there,*

On the lines above, the word “safe” proves that the character of “us” respect to “the watcher”. The word “safe” based on Hornby’s dictionary means “protected from any danger or harm” (2010: 1302). It can be assumed that “the watcher” is very beautiful and sacred so without doing anything, just with her presence, the “home” seems safer. She is like an angel who gives euphoric state of security. The word “home” explains that she is watching from her home. The words “window”

and “gate” in the previous stanza support this idea. Home here has denotation meaning, “the house or flat/apartment that you live in, especially with your family” (2010: 718). It can be concluded that “the watcher” and “us” have a family relation.

Stanza three below shows once more the watcher’s wonderful love to the character “us”,

*Her thoughts were **all so full** of us,
She never could forget,
And so I think that where she is
She must be watching yet.*

The watcher’s love can be seen through the word “thought”. “Thought” is defined as “the act of thinking seriously and carefully about something” (Hornby, 2010: 1555). She gives all of her life, her self, and all the things which are alive in her to the character “us” because the watcher’s minds are so full of “us”. The unselfishness character of motherly love is shown by this word. It shows that the kind of love in this poem probably is motherly love, the relationship between a mother and her children.

The lines in stanza four bellow clearly express the relationship between “the watcher” and “us”,

*Waiting ‘til we **come home** to her
Anxious if we are late*

The word “home” is mentioned twice to show that she is really waiting in her home. The word “home” in the stanza above refers to its denotation meaning in which the family live. It clearly shows the relation between “the watcher” and

“us” as a family. Furthermore, the word “heaven” in line three and four of the fourth stanza shows that the watcher’s love is very sacred,

*Watching from **Heaven’s** window
Leaning from **Heaven’s** gate*

Heaven means “the place believed to be the home of God where good people go when die” (Hornby, 2010: 697), while in the connotation meaning, “heaven” is everlasting love that the watcher has for her beloved. Everlasting means her love is eternal and forever. Her love is sincere. It is proven when she still watches and waits for her beloved from heaven although she knows that she will not receive anything from her beloved in heaven.

4.2 Analysis of Symbol in Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”

In the first stanza line three and four, there are words “winter” and “summer”;

*In **winter** by the window,
In **summer** by the gate.*

Winter is the coldest season of the year. In winter many people get sick because of the cold air, and it makes them face the problem because they can not go outside to play or to work. The writer assumes “winter” is a symbol of sadness. Another symbol that is used in this poem is the usage of another name of season: summer. Summer is the season that has the sun everyday. In the summer there is no rain. Summer represents the cheerful time for people to enjoy the sunshine and the wind. Summer is full of happiness and is a perfect time to get a holiday and playing time. The sensation of summer is similar to the happy situation. It means the watcher always gives her care to her beloved in every situation whether she is

happy or sick. She always thinks about her beloved and gives her love to her beloved.

The symbol of everlasting love can be found in stanza four line three and four through the word “heaven”,

*Watching from **Heaven**'s window
Leaning from **Heaven**'s gate*

Heaven is the home of God and good people live after their death. God promises that heaven will be given to his lovers. It is believed as the most beautiful place. It is more comfortable than any other places in this world. In this poem heaven is a symbol of everlasting love from the watcher to her beloved. The writer assumes the usage of the word “heaven” is shown to strongly express that the watcher’s love is very sincere and everlasting. No one can stop her love. Her love is the highest kind of love and the most sacred of all emotional bonds because heaven is God’s place.

4.3 Analysis of Imagery in Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”

4.3.1 Visual Imagery

The visual imagery can be found in the first stanza below,

*In **winter** by the window
In **summer** by the gate*

Visual imagery is shown by the word “winter” and “summer” in this stanza. The word “winter” and “summer” means a season that exist in the world. Those words makes the reader will visualize the situation during the summer and the winter. The stanza above shows that the watcher’s love always exist in every situation.

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Visual imagery is shown by the word “waited” and “home” in the second stanza line three and four,

*The long way **home** would seem more safe
Because **she** waited there*

Those words make the reader will visualize the situation where woman is waiting at the home. The lines above show that the watcher gives her love through her care by always waiting.

The other visual imagery can be found in stanza four line fifteen and sixteen,

*Watching from **Heaven’s** window
Leaning from **Heaven’s** gate*

Visual imagery is shown by woman who has died is watching from heaven. The words of “heaven’s window” and “heaven’s gate”, the reader will build a mental picture about the woman who is watching and leaning in heaven. This lines tell the watcher is a good people because her love is sincere and everlasting.

4.3.2 Organic Imagery

The organic imagery can be found in the first stanza line two below,

***Anxious** if we were late*

The lines introduce the internal sensation or organic sensation through the word *Anxious*. By using this word, the readers will picture the sensation of anxiety. Anxious feeling shows that woman cares to her beloved, and the care is one of the aspects of love. The other organic imagery also found in stanza two line three,

*The long way home would seem more **safe***

The word “safe” contains organic imagery because it shows the readers about the tranquility and peacefulness felt by the speaker in the poem. They feel safe with the watcher’s presence. It is a form of the respect from the character “us” that call the watcher as an angel who gives peacefulness. From the word “safe” it shows that her love gives euphoric state of security.

4.3.3 Tactile Imagery

In stanza one line three and four, the tactile imagery can be seen through the words “winter” and “summer” bellow,

*In **winter** by the window*
*In **summer** by the gate*

The word “winter” and “summer” have been explained in the previous diction analysis that means the coldest season and the warmest season. Those words make the readers to imagine the cold touch on their skin in winter and the warm touch on their skin in summer. The lines above try to show the watcher’s love is very loyal. She will always love her beloved even though the bad thing happens.

4.4. The Concept of Motherly Love in Margaret Widdemer’s “The Watcher”

First, “The watcher” tells the unconditional love from the watcher to her beloved. The unconditional love is proven in stanza one line 1,

She always leaned to watch for us

The watcher proves her love by always watches her beloved. The word “always” and “watch” in this line explain the unconditional love. It means that there is no reason can stop the watcher to give love for her beloved. In this line her love is proven by an activity of watching. The watcher’s love is for all future time, it can not be stopped, those make her love is called as unconditional. The unconditional

love from the watcher to her beloved also can be seen in stanza one line three and four,

*In winter by the window,
In summer by the gate*

The author uses winter and summer not the other season to express the watcher's unconditional love. In the previous analysis tells winter is the coldest season and symbol of sadness, while summer is the warmest season which symbol of happiness. From that explanation of the word "winter" "summer" actually the author want tells that the watcher's love for her beloved is unconditional, she will always love her beloved everytime, when she is happy or even feels sad or sick. There is no requirement that her beloved has to do to be loved, because she will always love them everytime. The stanza four line three and four also show the character of unconditional love,

*Watching from Heaven's window
Leaning from Heaven's gate*

In the previous analysis, the word "heaven" means the place believed to be the home of God where good people go when die. It means that heaven is the place of after life. The after life means an eternity. It shows that the watcher's love is unconditional because her love is everlasting. No matter where is she, even when she is in heaven, she will always shows her love to her beloved.

From the explanation above, the writer can conclude that the watcher's care to watch and wait for her beloved are manifestation of unconditional love. The unconditional love is proven by everlasting love with the use of the diction , "always", "winter-summer", and "Heaven".

Second, “The watcher” shows that character “the watcher” gives the most precious she has for her beloved. She gives her care. This poem shows the inequality which the watcher always gives her love and the character “us” just receive it. It is proven in stanza three line one and stanza four line one

*She must be watching yet
Waiting till we come home to her*

The lines above show how the watcher assumes that her care is very important thing to do to prove her love. Therefore she must be watching yet until her beloved come to her. It clearly expresses that the watcher gives her care to her beloved by watching and waiting.

The watcher gives her care to her beloved can be seen in the first stanza line one,

Anxious if we were late

In this line tells that the watcher feels worried because her beloved does not arrive at the time she or he must be arriving. She worries if something bad happen to her beloved out there. Her anxious feeling is a sign that she has love to her beloved which is supported by the statement from Erich Fromm that mother’s love for life is as infectious as her anxiety is. In this line we can see the watcher shows a care through feeling anxious to her beloved. The watcher also shows her care by thinking about her beloved. It can be seen in stanza three line one and two,

*Her thoughts were all so full of us,
She never could forget,*

The word “thought” is defined as “the act of thinking seriously and carefully about something” (Hornby, 2010: 1555). It shows the act of care by thinking

about something that she loves. The phrase of “never could forget” strongly express that the watcher always thinks about her beloved and it shows that her beloved is an important person to her life. From that explanation we know that the lines tell that the watcher is doing an active care by thinking so full of her beloved to prove her love.

From the explanation above the writer comes to a conclusion that the watcher loves her beloved through giving something precious she has, not the material thing but she gives her care. It is shown in the poem by the author’s diction, “waiting”, “anxious”, “thinking”. The writer thinks that those words show the concept of motherly love from Erich Fromm in which love implies care and it is the most evident of motherly love itself.

Third, “The Watcher” shows that her self is the euphoric state of security. It is proven in stanza two line 3 and 4

*The long way home would seem more safe,
Because she waited there,*

The word of “safe” is defined as “protected from any danger or harm” (Hornby, 2010: 1302). It means that the lines tell the watcher is a protector who gives euphoric state of security because just by her presence when she waits at the home, the home seems safer. It implies that the watcher here is a mother based on *The Art of Loving*’s statement that mother is warmth, mother is food, and mother is the euphoric state of satisfaction and security.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing the poem, the writer comes into conclusion that based on the type of love in *The Art of Loving*, the love in Margaret Widdemer’s “The

Watcher” can be categorized into motherly love. The analysis of the intrinsic elements,- the diction, symbol and imagery- has shown that the theme of the poem is love between mother and children.

The analysis shows that the characteristics of motherly love are found in “The Watcher”. The poem tells about a mother’s unconditional love. There is no condition to love her beloved because her love is sincere and eternal. The poem also shows the characteristics of motherly love that the essence of motherly love is giving care for the child’s growth. The care is shown by waiting, watching and feeling anxious to her children. Motherly love is unselfishness. It has the ability to give everything and wants nothing but the happiness of her children. Therefore, motherly love is considered the highest kind of love.

The explanations above strengthen the writer’s opinion that “the watcher” has motherly love toward the “us”. It is impossible if the poem talks about the love between a wife and her husband because the object is more than one person, “us”. The relationship between a wife and her husband is categorized into erotic love. It may be between sister and her other sister, but it should be categorized into brotherly love which its nature is love between equals. It opposes with this poem which the watcher always gives her love without receive anything from the character “us”. It can be ensured that the character of “the watcher” refers to mother and the character who “the watcher” gives love, “us” refers to her children. It is in line with what Erich Fromm said in *The Art of Loving* that the motherly love is the love between the mother and the children.

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APPENDIX

The Watcher

by Margaret Widdemer

She always leaned to watch for us

Anxious if we were late,

In winter by the window,

In summer by the gate.

And though we mocked her tenderly

Who had such foolish care,

The long way home would seem more safe,

Because she waited there,

Her thoughts were all so full of us,

She never could forget,

And so I think that where she is

She must be watching yet.

Waiting 'til we come home to her

Anxious if we are late

Watching from Heaven's window

Leaning from Heaven's gate